

Innovation School Information Sheet

Proposed Innovation School Name: 21st Century Skills Academy

Full/Partial Conversion or New: New

Proposed Address: 174 Brush Hill Avenue,
West Springfield, MA 01089

Primary Contact Information: Dr. Anne S. McKenzie
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Proposed Opening Year: 2011-2012

Proposed Duration of Innovation Plan: 5 years

School Year	Grade Levels	Total Student Enrollment	Total Number of Staff
First Year	9-10	100	11
Second Year	9-11	150	15
Third Year	9-12	200	20
Fourth Year	9-12	200	20
Fifth Year	9-12	200	20
At Full Enrollment	9-12	200	20

Will this school serve students from multiple districts? Yes

If yes, list the towns/cities in the proposed regions.

LPVEC member school districts:

Agawam Public Schools
East Longmeadow Public Schools
Hampden Wilbraham Regional School District
Longmeadow Public Schools
Ludlow Public Schools
Southwick Tolland Regional School District
West Springfield Public Schools

Innovation School Prospectus Certification Statement

Proposed Innovation School Name: 21st Century Skills Academy

Proposed city/Town Location: 174 Brush Hill Avenue, West Springfield, MA 01089

I hereby certify that the information submitted in the prospectus is true to the best of my knowledge and belief.

Signature of Authorized Person _____ **Date:** _____

Authorized Person Information:

Print/Type Name: Dr. Russell Johnston, Superintendent
Address: West Springfield Public Schools
26 Central Street
West Springfield, MA 01089

Phone Number: 413 263-3289

Fax Number: 413 739-8748

Email Address: johnston@wsps.org

Executive Summary

The mission of the 21st Century Skills Academy is to link learning with student interests and career preparation. Through the integration of rigorous academics, relevant technical and work-based learning, and comprehensive student supports, the 21st Century Skills Academy will lead to higher graduation rates, increased college enrollments and higher earning potential for all graduates. 21st Century Skills Academy will serve high school students in Hampden County, including LPVEC member districts, with a focus on recruiting students who are economically disadvantaged and students from districts with drop out rates that exceed the state average.

The 21st Century Skills Academy (21st CSA) is designed to address the critical need for educational alternatives for students in Hampden County. 21st CSA is committed to preparing students for college and careers through a solid foundation of academic excellence integrated with relevant and rigorous career and technical education. The instructional plan developed emphasizes our commitment to the proper preparation of students to meet and exceed core State Standards while deepening technical skills. The instructional and student assessment philosophy integrates the core components and guiding principles of Linked Learning. Students select a career pathway. Pathways are organized around a major industry sector. Each pathway incorporates four components: 1) a challenging academic curriculum; 2) a rigorous technical curriculum; 3) work-based learning; and 4) targeted interventions and supports. Curriculum, instruction, and assessment at 21st CSA provide students with access to a full range of post secondary career and education opportunities and result in high levels of student achievement. Teachers engage students in an academically and technically integrated curriculum using a range of instructional strategies including project-based learning, inquiry learning, and virtual learning. Student assessments reflect 21st century products.

The 21st Century Skills Academy will serve students from all of Hampden County with an emphasis on expanding educational opportunities for economically disadvantaged students. Our goal is to improve academic achievement and educational attainment of all students especially those who may be first generation college students. Data from the lead applicant district (WSPS) demonstrate the need for educational alternatives in the region. The 2009 graduation rate for the West Springfield School District (applicant district) was 66.4 percent for all students and 52.6 percent for low income students, significantly lower than the state average. The dropout rate for all students in WSPS in 2009 was 17.7 percent and 27.6 percent for low income students. The dropout percentages for WSPS students are significantly higher than the state average. Studies have shown that students at career focused academies have lower dropout rates, higher attendance, higher rates of successful course completion, and apply to college at higher rates than their peers in traditional secondary schools. In addition to a high drop out rate and low graduation rate, 46 percent of the WSPS population qualifies as low income. Research demonstrates that the strongest linear relationship exists between socio economic status and educational achievement. In order to improve the educational outcomes of students from low income households, we have designed a learning program that emphasizes personalization, flexibility, and increasing aspiration by providing students access to relevant, technologically enriched learning experiences and college level coursework.

The partner responsible for the development of an innovation plan under which the school will operate and for meeting the terms of the performance contract is the Lower Pioneer Valley Educational Collaborative (LPVEC). WSPS selected LPVEC as its external partner based on LPVEC's experience developing and delivering online education for special populations and Ch. 74 approved career and technical education programs. The LPVEC will be responsible for the administration and oversight of all academic and career and technical programming for students at the 21st Century Skills Academy. In order to achieve the mission of the proposed innovation school, WSPS needs to leverage LPVEC's knowledge and experience in college and career readiness. Currently the LPVEC has several matriculation agreements with two and four year colleges that align with approved Tech Prep Pathways. As a member of the LPVEC, WSPS has a long history of partnering with the Collaborative in the development and implementation of several education programs and services. The LPVEC possesses the capacity to develop and operate the proposed innovation school. Presently, the LPVEC operates twelve career and technical education programs, ten of which are Ch. 74 approved. In addition to offering career and technical education, the LPVEC administers eighteen special education programs. Both the Government Finance Officers Association and the Association of School Business Officials have presented the LPVEC with awards for budget development and presentation, which demonstrates the LPVEC's capacity to develop, implement, and monitor budgets.

Public Statement

The Lower Pioneer Valley Educational Collaborative in partnership with West Springfield Public Schools will engage in the planning and development of the 21st Century Skills Academy beginning spring 2011. 21st CSA is a secondary school located on the 174 Brush Hill Avenue, West Springfield Campus of the LPVEC. The mission of 21st CSA is to prepare all students for college and careers. The curriculum at 21st CSA links learning, student interests, and career preparation. Instructional delivery will integrate online learning and face to face individualized instruction. 21st CSA will open for students in grades 9-10 in the fall of 2011 and serve students in grades 9-12 by fall of 2013. 21st CSA will serve 200 students at full enrollment.

I. Mission, Vision, Statement of Need, and Proposed Partner

A. Mission Statement

The mission of the 21st Century Skills Academy is to link learning with student interests and career preparation. Through the integration of rigorous academics, relevant technical and work-based learning, and comprehensive student supports, the 21st Century Skills Academy leads to higher graduation rates, increased college enrollments and higher earning potential for all graduates. 21st Century Skills Academy will serve high school students in Hampden County, including LPVEC member districts, with a focus on recruiting students who are economically disadvantaged and from districts with drop out rates that exceed the state average.

B. Vision Statement

Based on the Linked Learning model managed by ConnectEd: The California Center for College and Career, the 21st Century Skills Academy integrates four guiding principles and four core components. Students identify a career pathway aligned to their interests. Pathways are organized around major industry sectors such as health science and medical technology, engineering, information systems and support networks, and business and finance. Each pathway includes an academic component, technical component, work-based learning component, and support services. Four guiding principles ground teaching and learning at the 21st Century Skills Academy.

1. Students are prepared for both postsecondary education and career not one or the other. The 21st Century Skills Academy recognizes that most financially and personally rewarding careers in the future economy will require some form of postsecondary education. All students will have access to dual enrollment at either a four year or two year institution of higher education.
2. Students are prepared for a wide range of postsecondary education options including two and four year colleges, apprenticeships, certificate programs and military service.
3. Educators connect academics to real world applications through the development and implementation of 21st Century curricula. Content, instructional methods and assessment reflect the skills that students will need to participate in a global economy and contribute to a democratic society. Examples of 21st Century assessments include documentaries, podcasts, CAD projections, films, screenplays, quarterly e-reports, pecha kucha presentations, and blogs. Content is interdisciplinary, theme-based and informed by practitioners in actual fields of practice. Instructional strategies integrate Web 2.0 technologies such as YouTube, Facebook, Vokis, and Second Life simulations.
4. Educators have high expectations corresponding to high levels of student achievement. Student achievement is measured in multiple ways

including graduation, academic and technical competency assessments, postsecondary transitions to career and education, and attainment of a formal post secondary credential.

A Typical Day at 21st Century Skills Academy

Each student enrolled in the 21st Century Skills Academy will have an advisor. Advisors include all school staff. The advisor and student will work together to design a program of study that reflects the interests of the student and is organized around a career and postsecondary pathway. Advisors will guide students through a variety of assessments, inventories, and decision making tools to help students identify a pathway that aligns well with their areas of interest. Once a student has chosen a pathway, counselors will assist students with course selections and cooperative and work-based learning opportunities. In order to individualize the learning environment as much as possible, the majority of courses will be offered online. Students will have the option of enrolling in online courses through the LPVEC or a local college. On site content experts and e-learning facilitators will be available at the LPVEC to assist students in their online studies. Every student will have a flexible schedule that includes work-based learning, advisory meetings, online instruction, and individualized interventions and supports. Students will be able to customize their school day with varying start and end times that meet their individual academic, emotional, and technical skill development. The developers of the 21st Century Skills Academy are committed to creating an educational space where students and adults are motivated and engaged. Our school community will be a place where adults and young people discuss intellectual pursuits that have social and academic relevance using complex communication and critical thinking skills. The school will operate year round using a trimester schedule.

C. Statement of Need

The 21st Century Skills Academy will serve students from all of Hampden County with an emphasis on expanding educational opportunities for economically disadvantaged students. Our goal is to improve academic achievement and educational attainment of all students especially those who may be first generation college students. The four-year graduation rate for the applicant district's 2009 cohort was 66.4 percent for all students and 52.6 percent for low income students, significantly lower than the state average. The dropout rate for the same 2009 cohort was 17.7 percent with 27.6 percent of those students falling in the low-income bracket. Dropout percentages for WSPS students are significantly higher than the state average. Studies have shown that students at career focused academies have lower dropout rates, higher attendance, higher rates of successful course completion, and apply to college at higher rates than their peers in traditional secondary schools. In addition to a high dropout rate and low graduation rate, 46 percent of the WSPS population qualifies as low income. Research demonstrates that the strongest linear relationship exists between socio economic status and educational achievement. In order to improve the educational outcomes of students from low-income households, we have designed

a learning program that emphasizes personalization, flexibility, and increasing aspiration by providing students access to relevant, technologically enriched learning experiences and college level coursework.

D. Primary Proposed Partnership

The partner responsible for the development of an innovation plan under which the school will operate and for meeting the terms of the performance contract is the Lower Pioneer Valley Educational Collaborative. WSPS selected LPVEC as its external partner based on LPVEC's experience developing and delivering online education for special populations and Ch. 74 approved career and technical education programs. The LPVEC will be responsible for the administration and oversight of all academic and career and technical programming for students at the 21st Century Skills Academy. In order to achieve the mission of the proposed innovation school, WSPS needs to leverage LPVEC's knowledge and experience in college and career readiness. Currently the LPVEC has several matriculation agreements with two and four year colleges that align with approved Tech Prep Pathways. As a member of the LPVEC, WSPS has a long history of partnering with the Collaborative in the development and implementation of several education programs and services. The LPVEC possesses the capacity to develop and operate the proposed innovation school. Presently, the LPVEC operates twelve career and technical education programs, ten of which are Ch. 74 approved. In addition to offering career and technical education, the LPVEC administers eighteen special education programs. Both the Government Finance Officers Association and the Association of School Business Officials have presented the LPVEC with awards for budget development and presentation, which demonstrates the LPVEC's capacity to develop, implement, and monitor budgets. The LPVEC will provide the following services to WSPS:

1. Development, implementation and evaluation of the educational program including academic and technical curricula, tiered instructional strategies and supports, and a comprehensive assessment plan
2. Recruitment, hiring, supervision and training of all 21st Century Skills Academy staff
3. Development and implementation of appropriate support programs to optimize the health, safety, and wellness of students
4. Development, implementation, and administration of the innovation school budget in compliance with WSPS financial policies
5. Oversight of required program audits

II. *Improving School Performance and Student Achievement Through Increased Autonomy and Flexibility*

A. Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment

Instructional and Student Assessment Philosophy – The 21st Century Skills Academy is designed to address the critical need for educational alternatives for

students in Hampden County. 21st CSA is committed to preparing students for college and careers through a solid foundation of academic excellence integrated with relevant and rigorous career and technical education. The instructional plan developed emphasizes our commitment to the proper preparation of students to meet and exceed core State Standards while deepening technical skills. The instructional and student assessment philosophy integrates the core components and guiding principles of Linked Learning. Students select a pathway. Pathways are organized around a major industry sector. Each pathway incorporates four components: 1) a challenging academic curriculum; 2) a rigorous technical curriculum; 3) work-based learning; and 4) targeted interventions and supports. Curriculum, instruction, and assessment at 21st CSA provide students with access to a full range of post secondary career and education opportunities and result in high levels of student achievement. Teachers engage students in an academically and technically integrated curriculum using a range of instructional strategies including project-based learning, inquiry learning, and virtual learning. Student assessments reflect 21st century products.

Implementation of Educational Program – Student and Faculty Groupings – During the summer, students will meet with advisors to determine a career pathway and corresponding course of study that prepares them for postsecondary and career options and meets WSPS criteria for a high school diploma. Students will be grouped according to career pathway and take courses designed to meet their academic and technical skill needs. Academic instructional delivery will occur primarily through online learning. E-learning facilitators, content specialists, and faculty advisors will work with students to design and develop a digital portfolio that demonstrates a student's technical and academic competencies. Digital portfolios provide evidence of student learning collected throughout each student's high school experience. Upon graduating from 21st CSA, students will present their digital portfolio to a panel of advisors including one school committee member, the principal, the student's advisor, a practitioner from the student's chosen pathway, a peer, and family member. At full enrollment each faculty member will work with ten student advisees each year. Optimally, students will work with the same faculty advisor for their entire high school experience. Enrollment in online courses will vary depending on the course. Enrollment in online courses will range from 12-25 students per course.

Approach to Literacy and Numeracy Instruction for Diverse Learners – The National Research Council indicates that the integrated and balanced development of all five strands of mathematical proficiency should guide the teaching and learning of mathematics. The five strands include:

- ◇ Conceptual understanding – comprehension of mathematical concepts, operations, and relations
- ◇ Procedural fluency – skill in carrying out procedures flexibly, accurately, efficiently, and appropriately

- ◇ Strategic competence – ability to formulate, represent, and solve mathematical problems
- ◇ Adaptive reasoning – a capacity for logical thought, reflection, explanation, and justification
- ◇ Productive disposition – habitual inclination to see mathematics as sensible, useful, worthwhile, and coupled with a belief in diligence and one’s own efficacy (Kilpatrick, et al., 2001, p. 11).

When teaching diverse learners and students with disabilities, research from the National Mathematics Advisory Report (2008) identify four methods of instruction that show the most promise.

- ◇ Explicit and systematic instruction – teachers clearly state a teaching objective and follow a defined instructional sequence
- ◇ Self – instruction – students use a variety of self-regulation strategies to manage themselves as learners
- ◇ Peer tutoring – students working in pairs to help themselves learn
- ◇ Visual representations – manipulatives, pictures, number lines, and graphs

In the practice brief *Effective Instruction for Adolescent Struggling Readers*, the Center on Instruction identifies five general areas of instructional focus for adolescent and secondary readers. The areas include: 1) word study; 2) fluency; 3) vocabulary; 4) comprehension; and 5) motivation. The 21st CSA curriculum will integrate all five components of effective literacy instruction.

Meeting the Needs of English language learners

In order to address the needs of English language learners and students with special needs, 21st CSA will employ a variety of research based strategies and tiered interventions. These strategies will include Sheltered English Immersion for students whose primary language is not English. Sheltered English Immersion (SEI) is an instructional approach that engages English language learners in developing grade-level content-area knowledge, academic skills, and increased English proficiency. In SEI classes, teachers use clear and direct language and a wide range of scaffolding strategies to communicate content to students. SEI strategies are effective in addressing the instructional needs of all diverse learners.

Schoolwide Assessment Plan

21st CSA will assess student achievement in developing conceptual thinking, problem-solving skills, and content mastery using a variety of assessment tools including standardized testing (MCAS), occupational proficiency testing, and benchmark assessments in academics and career competencies. The 21st CSA faculty bases its assessment methods on the following beliefs:

- ◇ In order to have a complete picture of a student’s growth, differentiated assessment methods must be used. Assessments for individual students

should focus on individual mastery of specific content standards and learning objectives.

- ◇ Assessments should be aligned to prioritized standards and student objectives.
- ◇ Evaluation criteria should be aligned to student assessment, then communicated to students prior to instruction. Identifying what we expect students to know and be able to do with specific information is a vital piece of all assessment methods.
- ◇ Assessment should promote and support reflection and self-evaluation on the part of students, staff, and parents.

Students' performance and assessment will take into account several assessment methods based on the work of W. James Popham (*Transformative Assessment*), Heidi Hayes Jacobs (*Curriculum 21 Essential Education for a Changing World*), and Pomperaug Regional School District 15 (*Performance-Based Learning and Assessment*). Each of these authors identifies integral elements of effective assessment programs that facilitate learning. Performance-based assessment integrates three types of competencies in assessment design:

- ◇ Competencies from academic disciplines including knowledge from such areas as the arts, humanities, health science and physical health, science, math, and technology
- ◇ Interpersonal competencies including communication skills, cooperative learning, and courtesy
- ◇ Intrapersonal competencies including organization, time management, and persistence.

21st century assessments include products and performances contemporary professionals use in their respective fields. Examples of 21st century assessments include documentaries, webcasts, and online journals. Transformative assessment practices include formative assessment tools designed to transform instructional approaches and significantly improve student learning.

Graduates of 21st CSA will complete a digital portfolio that will provide evidence of student proficiency in academic and career, vocational, and technical education standards. Portfolios will include self-selected works that exemplify mastery of standards-based content knowledge and skills.

B. Schedule and Calendar

School Calendar and Daily/Weekly Schedule for Students

21st CSA will exceed state requirements on minimum number of school days and instructional hours. The school will operate on a semester schedule with additional scheduled contact time between students (advisees) and their advisors (faculty) during the summer. Students will be required to log on to academic courses for a minimum of 27.5 hours per week. In addition to logging on to their online courses, students will be required to attend the campus for a minimum of 5

hours per week to receive tiered instruction as needed, meet with their advisor, and receive academic support from e-learning coaches/content specialists. Students who do not have a cooperative work placement or internship will be expected to attend campus more frequently than students with internships and work placements. Campus hours will be from 7:30-6 daily. The hours of operation are designed to provide students with flexibility. The charts below provide examples of student schedules. Since each student will have an individualized schedule, student schedules will vary.

	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
8-9	CTE shop class on campus	CTE shop class on campus	CTE shop class on campus	CTE shop class on campus	CTE shop class on campus
9-10	CTE shop class on campus	CTE shop class on campus	CTE shop class on campus	CTE shop class on campus	CTE shop class on campus
10-11	Tiered Instruction	Meet with advisor	E-Learning Coaching	Tiered Instruction	
11-12					
12-1					
1-2					
2-3					
3-4					
4-5					
5-6					

*During highlighted times student may engage in asynchronous online learning off campus.

	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
8-9					
9-10					
10-11					
11-12			Meet with advisor	Tiered Instruction	E-Learning Coaching
12-1	CTE shop class on campus	CTE shop class on campus	CTE shop class on campus	CTE shop class on campus	CTE shop class on campus
1-2	CTE shop class on campus	CTE shop class on campus	CTE shop class on campus	CTE shop class on campus	CTE shop class on campus
2-3					
3-4	Coop Work Placement		Coop Work Placement		Coop Work Placement
4-5	Coop Work		Coop Work		Coop Work

	Placement		Placement		Placement
5-6	Coop Work Placement		Coop Work Placement		Coop Work Placement

	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
8-9					
9-10			Internship		
10-11			Internship		
11-12			Internship		
12-1					
1-2	E-Learning Coaching	Coop Work Placement	Tiered Instruction	Coop Work Placement	
2-3	Tiered Instruction	Coop Work Placement	Tiered Instruction	Coop Work Placement	Tiered Instruction
3-4	Meeting with Advisor	Coop Work Placement		Coop Work Placement	Tiered Instruction
4-5		Coop Work Placement		Coop Work Placement	
5-6		Coop Work Placement		Coop Work Placement	

Staff Schedule

Each faculty member will work a 37.5 hour work week for all weeks that school is in session. School will be in session for 36 weeks from September through June and for ten days during July and August. During the regular school year, teachers will meet with advisees for ten hours per week, provide tiered instruction and e-learning coaching for sixteen hours per week, and meet in professional learning communities for 7.5 hours per week. Teachers will have staggered but overlapping schedules to ensure that students have access to faculty between the hours of 8-6 and that staff have opportunities to collaborate and engage in job-embedded professional development. The chart below provides an example of a teacher schedule.

	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
8-9					Meeting with advisees
9-10	Tiered Instruction		PLC		Meeting with advisees
10-11	Tiered Instruction	Meeting with advisee	Meeting with advisee	Tiered Instruction	E-Learning Coaching
11-12	PLC	Meeting with advisee	Meeting with advisee	Tiered Instruction	E-Learning Coaching
12-1	PLC + Lunch	PLC+Lunch	PLC+Lunch	PLC+Lunch	PLC+Lunch
1-2	E-Learning Coaching	PLC	Tiered Instruction	PLC	PLC
2-3	Tiered Instruction	Tiered Instruction	Tiered Instruction	E-Learning Coaching	Tiered Instruction
3-4	Meeting with advisee	Tiered Instruction	E-Learning Coaching	E-Learning Coaching	Tiered Instruction
4-5	Meeting with advisee	E-Learning Coaching	E-Learning Coaching	Meeting with advisees	
5-6		E-Learning Coaching		Meeting with advisees	

The calendar and schedule emphasize flexibility in order to maximize personalized learning.

C. Staffing

21st CSA is a school operated by the Lower Pioneer Valley Educational Collaborative. As such, employees of 21st CSA will be subject to LPVEC policies and applicable procedures. The Executive Director of the LPVEC, Dr. Anne McKenzie, will act as the superintendent for 21st CSA. The Director of Finance and Operations of the LPVEC, Anna Bishop, will oversee budget development and administration and facilities management for 21st CSA. The staff dedicated to 21st CSA is delineated below:

Principal Overseeing:
 16 Content Specialists/E-Learning Coaches
 1 IT Instructor/Administrator
 1 Guidance Counselor
 1 Instructional Specialist

Staffing patterns for 21st CSA will differ from the traditional instructional delivery models at the LPVEC and in West Springfield. 21st CSA will hire Content Specialists/E-Learning Coaches in lieu of traditional content teachers.

Four Content Specialists/E-Learning Coaches for each content area subject (English Language Arts, History, Mathematics, and Science) will be assigned to each grade at the secondary level. Content Specialists/E-Learning Coaches will possess certification in their subject area issued by DESE and receive specialized training in online pedagogy and facilitating learning for students using virtual environments. Instructional coaches will receive Category Training to ensure their capacity to work with English language learners. All instructional staff and administration will receive targeted professional development in response to intervention, instructional practices that maximize student achievement for diverse learners, and fostering conditions that support inclusion. In addition to instructional coaches, 21st CSA will hire one Instructional Specialist to assist teachers in designing and implementing strategies that support learners with diverse and unique educational needs.

The staffing structure at 21st CSA is designed to create flexible and personalized instruction. Students must meet face to face with instructors and advisors regularly in order to ensure that the students meet learning and achievement targets. 21st CSA organizes teacher schedules around students' needs. To that end, faculty at 21st CSA will not maintain the same schedule. Teachers will need to demonstrate subject matter competency, technological competency, and possess the personal attributes necessary to act as a mentor and advisor. At 21st CSA we believe that we teach students not subjects; therefore we expect Content Specialists/E-Learning Coaches to be knowledgeable about their subject matter but equally passionate about encouraging and motivating students.

Staff at 21st CSA will be employees of the Lower Pioneer Valley Educational Collaborative (LPVEC). Staff will be subject to policies of the LPVEC Board of Governors. Instructors at the LPVEC do not have a collective bargaining agreement. All employees of the LPVEC are considered employees at will. Teachers receive an appointment letter annually. The working conditions of 21st CSA faculty will differ from the working conditions of traditional LPVEC teachers in that 21st CSA faculty will work flexible schedules, with start and ending times varying from day to day. The purpose of the flexible schedule is to maximize flexible learning options for students.

21st CSA staff will have representation on the LPVEC Joint Labor Management Team (JLMT). The JLMT meets monthly to discuss working conditions and policies and to facilitate effective communication among departments and between staff and administration. Board meetings follow the JLMT monthly. The Executive Director and Human Resources Director bring recommendations and concerns from JLMT to the board each month as needed.

D. Professional Development

Per the Innovation Schools Request for Proposals, the elements pertaining to professional development do not need to be addressed until the innovation plan stage.

E. District Policies and Procedures

Governance and Decision-Making Structure

The governance and decision-making structure of 21st CSA will reflect the overall governance structure of the Lower Pioneer Valley Educational Collaborative. The LPVEC Board of Governors will set policies for 21st CSA. Budget approval will adhere to the process followed by all LPVEC programs. The LPVEC will include the 21st CSA budget in its annual submittal to the Government Finance Officers Association and Association of School Business Officials for peer review and evaluation. The staff of 21st CSA will create a budget based on school data and designed to address the educational needs of students. As with all LPVEC educational programs, staff generate program budgets annually based on student performance data and Perkins Indicators as applicable. Advisory councils consisting of parents and community members review annual budget requests and provide input to staff prior to the Board of Governors voting to adopt the entire LPVEC budget.

The proposed governance and decision-making structure at 21st CSA reflects the guiding principles of decision-making and governance at the LPVEC. These principles are: the staff closest to the student should have the greatest degree of input when determining budget and resource allocation and priorities; decisions should be based on quantitative and qualitative data; policies, procedures, expenditures and revenues should be characterized by transparency and communicated clearly to stakeholders; budget and policy development should provide a sufficient degree of flexibility to ensure that programs and services remain responsive to students, parents, and school districts. LPVEC's program centered approach to budget and policy development will support the mission of 21st CSA – a mission focused on individualized instruction to ensure that every student is prepared for college and career.

In addition to decision-making and budget autonomy, 21st CSA will seek flexibility in promotion and graduation standards. Similar to Sir Ken Robinson, 21st CSA does not believe that sorting students by “date of manufacture” represents an empirically sound method of organizing curriculum and instruction. Rather, staff at 21st CSA will collaborate with students, professionals from industry and business, and higher education institutions to develop competencies that students will demonstrate in order to progress through the curriculum. Staff will develop performance based competencies that align to Massachusetts academic and career and vocational education frameworks. Staff will assess students using a combination of traditional (numeric) grades and narrative standards-based evaluations. 21st CSA derived the rationale for implementing a standards driven and competency based evaluation system from *Tough Choices Tough Times*. *Tough Choices Tough Times* delineates the different rates at which students progress and underscores the point that not all students require the same amount of time (semesters or years) to master content and skills. A standards driven competency based evaluation system will allow each student to receive

individual feedback on his or her knowledge and skills. Consequently, students can share meaningful performance data with prospective employers and colleges.

F. Budget

In order to achieve its mission, 21st CSA proposes to direct funds to online curricula, professional development for teachers to support students in virtual learning environments and in the educational applications of new media literacies and Web 2.0 tools, supports for highly structured field-based internships, and dual enrollment for students who elect the option. In addition to full time staff, 21st CSA will employ teachers on a part time basis as needed to develop and teach online courses. These teachers will be paid a stipend for course development and online teaching. 21st CSA will also purchase courses from a vetted third party vendor with a demonstrated track record of fostering student achievement in virtual learning environments. These budget priorities directly align with the mission of 21st CSA – to link learning, student interests, and career preparation.

III. *Capacity of Applicant Group*

The preliminary design team for the 21st CSA proposal included representatives from West Springfield Public Schools, the Institute for Research and Innovation at LPVEC, the Leadership Team of LPVEC, and members of the LPVEC superintendents' advisory council. The West Springfield Public Schools was selected as the grant applicant because it is a Race to the Top district, its drop out rate exceeds the state average, and its percentage of students with low socio-economic status is higher than the state average. The primary purpose of 21st CSA is to increase the educational attainment and achievement of all students through relevant instruction focused on college and career readiness. 21st CSA is committed to ensuring that students from economically disadvantaged backgrounds graduate from high school and continue to post secondary education and/or training.

The LPVEC (Dr. Anne McKenzie) was selected as the primary author of the proposal based on the organization's experience and accomplishments in career and technical education, online learning and related professional development, and budget preparation and presentation. The LPVEC administers eighteen special education programs and 12 career and technical education programs, of which 10 are Ch. 74 approved and 3 are nationally certified. Additionally, DESE has recognized the work of the LPVEC in developing online courses for at risk students, increasing teacher effectiveness in virtual learning environments, and increasing educator understanding and application of new media literacies. Since receiving a 776 online learning grant from DESE beginning in FY10, the LPVEC has created an entire 9th grade curriculum and provided numerous professional development opportunities for educators in the region in online course development and instruction. In addition to fund code 776, DESE selected LPVEC for a 170B grant to provide professional development in Web 2.0 instruction. DESE also selected the LPVEC to coordinate the statewide New Media Literacies Institute in conjunction with the University of Connecticut and

educational researchers in educational technology from around the country. The staff members responsible for coordinating these projects at the LPVEC include three doctoral candidates in the research, evaluation, and methods program at UMass Amherst. These faculty are trained psychometricians and well versed in research on effective educational design and assessment. The fourth faculty member is a certified Moodle Course Creator. He possesses a certification that only 50 people in the county possess. He currently provided professional development to career and technical educators in Connecticut in Moodle course development and Web 2.0 integration.

In addition to its experience implementing and administering effective educational programs, the LPVEC has been recognized since FY08 for its excellence in budget preparation and presentation. The LPVEC is the only educational collaborative to receive the Meritorious Budget Award from the Association of School Business Officials and the Distinguished Budget Presentation Award from the Government Finance Officers Association. These awards demonstrate the ability of the LPVEC to manage public funds effectively and responsibly.

The team from West Springfield Public Schools and the LPVEC include individuals with advanced degrees in education policy and administration, research, and special education. The Director of Finance at the LPVEC is nationally certified as a School Business Official through the Association of School Business Officials. She is one of eight business officials in the Commonwealth to have achieved this standard. The LPVEC was selected as the primary developer for an Innovation School because its governing and advisory boards represent several school districts in the region. The goal of 21st CSA is to address regional needs thereby avoiding duplication of effort across towns and municipalities. Dr. Anne McKenzie has been identified as the Lead Applicant Member based on her experience supervising a variety of career and technical education programs, online learning programs, and school improvement and assistance services.

Criteria for selecting the leader of 21st CSA will be determined by the planning group and based on research.

IV. Timetable for Development and Establishment

Task	Timeline
Revisit and Discuss Prospectus with LPVEC JLMT, WS JLMT, LPVEC Board of Governors, WS School Committee, LPVEC and WS Leadership Teams	Feb 2011
Identify members of planning team (may include all or some of prospectus design team plus additional members)	Feb 2011
Develop draft Innovation Plan	March 2011
Ensure capacity of LPVEC facility for projected enrollment; make modifications	March 2011

to space allocations as needed	
Design recruitment materials and begin student recruitment	Spring 2011
Vet online curricula for alignment with Massachusetts Curriculum Frameworks	Process initiated in fall of 2010 to continue until curriculum selected
Recruit parent, community, and professional advisory board for 21 st CSA	March 2011
Articulate and organize assessment system and data analysis system (including standardized assessment administration, local benchmark assessment administration, and portfolio development)	Summer 2011
Hire instructors, staff, and school leader	Spring 2011
Hold parent and community information sessions	Spring and Summer 2011
Open 21 st CSA	Fall 2011

V. *Measurable Annual Goals*

The table below provides measurable annual goals for 21st CSA that will be reviewed by the planning team and modified as needed to align with the Measurable Annual Goal template under development at EOE and DESE.

Focus	Goal
Student Attendance	Aggregate and subgroup student attendance will meet or exceed 95% annually
Student Safety and Discipline	21 st CSA will foster a learning environment in which students average fewer than 2 discipline reports annually
Student Promotion and Graduation	4 year adjusted cohort graduation rates for 21 st CSA students will meet or exceed 95%
Dropout Rates	Annual drop out rates for 21 st CSA students will be less than 2%
MCAS achievement	95% of students (aggregate and subgroups) will pass MCAS on the first attempt

VI. *Required Attachments.*